

1st December 1966.

Dr J.D. Watson,
Harvard University,
Biological Laboratories,
16 Divinity Avenue,
Cambridge,
Mass. 02139,
U.S.A.

Dear Jim,

Your proposed action is indefensible on two separate counts:

- 1) Using the importance of DNA as an excuse you have written a book which to most readers will be little more than personal gossip.
- 2) You are publishing an account of our collaboration in spite of my opposition to it.

I shall not enlarge on either of these points further since my previous letters have made my position quite clear.

Your book is unlikely to do you much good with the scientific community, especially when reviewers point out its deficiencies and the fact that its publication was a breach of good faith. I now want to raise a further matter with you which Maurice has pointed out to me. We feel you do not realize the wider harm you may do yourself in publishing. For example, the revelation of your motivation in our work together has come as an unpleasant surprise to both Max Perutz and myself. We feel it is not the sort of spirit we should like to see encouraged in young scientists. The way you tried to use your sister to get into contact with Maurice has also been the subject of much unfavourable comment. No doubt you have already considered both these points. But have you realized that literary people will soon move on to consider your motivation in writing such a book? Before long the New York Review of Books may be wondering whether the tone of your book (which certainly needs some explanation) can be accounted for by, say, the

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hypothesis that you are perhaps a latent homosexual. Your strange behaviour with young women and the fact that at 38 you are still unmarried could easily suggest such an idea. Against such public speculations you would have no adequate defence, since your own book has displayed at least part of your personal life so vividly. As your own lawyer said, you do not come out of the book very well yourself.

Personally I doubt whether these considerations will influence you, since you have become as obsessional about your story as the Ancient Mariner was about his. I therefore have to consider what steps I should take if, in spite of everything you persist in publication.

As you know my main objection to your book is that it is a gross and unnecessary invasion of my privacy. I have come to the conclusion that you do not understand what this means. I recall, for example, your action in writing to Salvadore Dali about me this summer although I expressly asked you not to. I therefore propose to make it clear to you by invading your privacy.

I am now planning to draft a book on somewhat the same lines as yours. So far I have only chosen its title ("The Loose Screw") and the opening sentence "Jim was always clumsy with his hands". The first chapter will deal with your lack of manual dexterity, your juvenile handwriting, your speech impediment, your early failures in public speaking, and lead back from there to your family background, including the tastes and interests of your parents, your activities as a quiz kid, education, etc. I have not yet planned the second chapter, but I expect it to deal with your sister, your emotional life, your scientific heroes, etc.

I am sure all your readers will find it even more fascinating than your own book! However, I do not intend to show it to anyone else at this stage, not even to Maurice. I cannot spare the time to write the whole first draft right away, so I will send it to you chapter by chapter. Only if you publish "Honest Jim" will I give it a wider circulation.

I hope by this means to show you what is meant by invasion of privacy.

In your last letter you said that I offer no possibility for compromise. My view of what you should do is very clear. You

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should discard the present book entirely. You should then attempt to write a properly documented account of the discovery, with all the intellectual arguments fully presented and any such personal details as are strictly necessary to explain the scientific developments. Moreover the tone of the writing should be radically altered. No other book is worth publishing, whatever literary people may tell you.

If you do not wish to write such a book you should publish nothing at all but persuade some competent modern historian to tackle it with the assistance of all of us. This would probably be the better course. I can assure you that if you persist in publishing your book in its present form you will live to regret it.

Yours sincerely,

F.H.C. Crick.

Copy to Professor M.H.F. Wilkins.